OVID
HEROIDES
SELECT EPISTLES

EDITED BY

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INTRODUCTION

1. THE POET

In antiquity literary criticism could be written by compiling a string of names. Thus Quintilian on the subject of Latin elegy: *elegia quoque Graecos prouocamus, cuius mihi tersus atque elegans maxime uidetur auctor Tibullus. sunt qui Propertium malint. Ouidius utroque lasciuior, sicut durior Gallus* (10.1.93). Late in Ovid's career, when he defines his own place in Roman literary history by referring to his most important contemporaries, we find that he draws up much the same list:

> Vergilium uidi tantum, nec auara Tibullo
>   tempus amicitiae fata dedere meae.
> successor fuit hic tibi, Galle, Propertius illi;
>   quartus ab his serie temporis ipse fui. (*Trist.* 4.10.51–4)

The selection is not random. He places himself in the same company at *Trist.* 2.445–66, where he discusses the works of Gallus, Tibullus, and Propertius, concluding (467), *his ego successi*. The literary climate in Rome during the decade following Octavian's victory at Actium was electric. The scene was dominated by the names O. recalls in *Trist.* 4.10: Virgil, who released his *Georgics* in 29 BC, was at work on an epic of Rome's foundation; Horace, the author of two books of satires and a collection of epodes, was nearing completion of the *Odes*;[1] but most importantly for O.'s own career, Tibullus and Propertius were producing books of amatory elegy appealing to the increasingly sophisticated tastes of the literate elite. They followed the example of their predecessor in the genre Cornelius Gallus, whose poetry was much admired by his contemporaries and must certainly have made a great impression on the young O., though it has not

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[1] O. mentions Horace in the couplet immediately preceding the passage cited here: *et tenuit nostras numerosus Horatius aures, | dum ferit Ausonia carmina culta lyra* (*Trist.* 4.10.49–50). He refers specifically to the *Odes*, and it may be assumed that they were the most potent influence on his own work; cf. A. Zingerle, *Ovidius und sein Verhältnis zu den Vorgängern und gleichzeitigen römischen Dichtern. 3 Heft: Ovidius und Horaz* (Innsbruck 1871).

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survived in sufficient quantity to allow us a sure assessment.[2] Suc-
ceeding generations may have looked back at this roster in despair
of emulating their achievements; but in 25 BC, when as a young man
O. gave up his professional ambitions for a life of literature,[3] it may
well have seemed the most obvious choice to make.

O. tells more about himself than we are accustomed to hear from
ancient poets, both in the long autobiographical poem composed to-
wards the end of his life during his exile on the Black Sea (*Trist.* 4.10)
and in numerous revealing remarks scattered throughout his works.
He was born Publius Ovidius Naso on 20 March 43 BC at Sulmo,
one of the chief towns of the Italian people known as the Paeligni,
located in a well-watered valley of central Italy: *Sulmo mihi patria est*
(*Trist.* 4.10.3). The date is significant, for as O. reminds us (*Trist.*
4.10.6) it was in this year that the two consuls Hirtius and Pansa both
fell in the campaign against Mark Antony at the head of the last
army of the Roman Republic to take the field. O.'s life and career
belong entirely to the early empire; his first public literary per-
formances probably occurred at least five years after the battle of
Actium and the fall of Alexandria (31–30 BC). And his death came
only a few years after that of the emperor who exiled him: no poet
so fully merits the epithet 'Augustan' as O., all of whose works were
conceived in, and inspired by, the era that bears that name.

O.'s family background marked him out for special preferment.

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[2] Only two fragments of his poetry survive: one pentameter quoted by Vi-
bius Sequester and substantial parts of nine lines preserved on papyrus, first
edited by R. D. Anderson, P. J. Parsons, and R. G. M. Nisbet, 'Elegiacs by
Gallus from Qaṣr Ibrîm', *J.R.S.* 69 (1979) 125–55. Gallus is often mentioned
by Propertius (e.g. 2.34.91–2) and O. (e.g. *Am.* 1.15.29–30), and Virgil pays
tribute to his poetry by incorporating Gallus as a character in his *Eclogues*
(6.64–73, 10.9–74). The discovery of the papyrus from Qaṣr Ibrîm has done
nothing to diminish the importance of Ross (1975), a highly suggestive study
of the role of Gallus in Augustan poetry. For a convenient summary of his
life and works, see E. Courtney, *The fragmentary Latin poets* (Oxford 1993) 259–
70, who somewhat optimistically includes *Ecl.* 10.42–63 as a third 'fragment'.

[3] The date can only be approximate. It derives from *Trist.* 4.10.57–8,
where O. describes his first performances as a poet: *carmina cum primum populo
iuuenalia legi, | barba resecta mihi bisue semelue fuit*. The reference is to the *depositio
barbae*, which provides no precise date: we may suppose O. to have been
about 18 years old. On this question and others in the life of the poet, cf.
Wheeler (1925) 11–17.

He was the second son of an old and wealthy equestrian family of some standing locally. Only a few generations before the birth of the poet, Sulmo had stood with the rest of the Paeligni against Rome in the general revolt of the Italian allied cities (91–89 BC). It was precisely communities such as Sulmo from which Augustus was eager to draw support for his new regime; and it was to ambitious local families such as O.'s that he would look to recruit new magistrates and senators. O. embarked on a career that might well have led to high public office. He studied rhetoric at Rome and Athens, and served in two administrative posts in the vigintivirate.[4] On his own testimony his earliest efforts in poetry must have taken place during this false start at an official career, which he threw over for the life of letters. It was not a choice calculated to please a father: O.'s had hoped for a more lucrative career for his son (*Trist.* 4.10.21–2), and Augustus, if he had noticed, would not have approved.

Over the next two decades, from *c.* 20 BC to AD 2, O. produced a remarkable series of elegiac works: during this time he composed the *Amores*, *Heroides*, *Ars amatoria*, and *Remedia amoris*, along with assorted minor works in elegy and one in another genre, the important tragedy *Medea*, now lost. There is no consensus about the relative chronology of this phase of O.'s career.[5] His poetry treats of life in the everyday world or in the realm of myth; there are very few datable references in the poems and they tell us little. The question is further complicated by the fact that his earliest collection, the *Amores*, comes down to us in an abridged edition of three books reduced from the original five: as O. wryly puts it in a prologue to the revised work, *leuior demptis poena duobus erit*. That the process of revision consisted exclusively of removal of certain poems and rearrangement of the survivors seems likely from the testimony of the poet and the texture of the work.[6] O.'s fluent manner of composition, often attested by

[4] On his early education and training, see Wheeler (1925) 4–11. O. probably served as one of the *tresuiri capitales*, but the evidence (*Trist.* 4.10.33–4) is not explicit; cf. Kenney (1969) 244. Later, he tells us (*Fast.* 4.383–4), he held a seat among the *decemuiri stlitibus iudicandis*.

[5] Earlier views are summarized in the standard surveys by Martini (1933) and Kraus (1968). More recent discussions can be found, e.g., in Jacobson (1974) 300–18, Syme (1978) 1–20, and McKeown (1987) 74–89.

[6] Cf. A. Cameron, 'The first edition of Ovid's *Amores*', *C.Q.* 18 (1968) 320–

the poet himself, led more easily to abandoning false starts than to careful re-working:

> multa quidem scripsi, sed, quae uitiosa putaui,
> emendaturis ignibus ipse dedi. (*Trist.* 4.10.61–2)

We can never know anything about the content of this first five-book collection. That it was a more diverse assortment than the final version is a reasonable surmise. The almost exclusive concentration on the themes of love and courtship in the *Amores* contrasts sharply with the diversity of the collections of elegies by Propertius and Tibullus, and is doubtless the result of conscientious editing. O. chose to explore a variety of themes in independent books of elegy before turning to a different genre altogether in the *Metamorphoses*.

In the years immediately preceding his exile O. seems to have been occupied primarily with the composition of narrative on a large scale in the *Fasti* and the *Metamorphoses*. His career, and life, changed abruptly with Augustus' edict in AD 8 relegating him to the town of Tomi located on the shores of the Black Sea. The reasons given by O. are the composition of the *Ars amatoria* and an unspecified affront to the emperor, *carmen et error* (*Trist.* 2.207). About the first charge O. is eloquent in his own defence: he devotes a book-length elegy (*Trist.* 2) to vindication of his work, and never wavers in his insistence on the integrity of his poetic enterprise. On the second count of the indictment O. maintains a steadfast silence, but the suspicion imposes itself that his disgrace was somehow related to the fall of Augustus' granddaughter Julia, exiled on a charge of adultery in the same year.[7] Life at Tomi did not suit O., but it did not break his commitment to the art that had called him as a young man. A

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33. This position remains controversial and arguments for a more complex re-working of the *Amores* with the addition of new material can be found in A. S. Hollis, *Ovid: Ars amatoria book I* (Oxford 1977) 150–1 and McKeown (1987) 86–9.

[7] The subject of O.'s exile has attracted, and will continue to attract speculation because of his own silence. J. C. Thibault, *The mystery of Ovid's exile* (Berkeley 1964) catalogues hypotheses advanced up to his time. More recently, Syme (1978) 215–29 makes the case for O.'s involvement in a political conspiracy against Augustus, while G. P. Goold, 'The cause of Ovid's exile', *I.C.S.* 8 (1983) 94–107 argues the position adopted here, that O. was involved in a scandal of a more personal nature.

steady stream of innovative new works poured from his pen: *Tristia*
in five books and *Epistulae ex Ponto* in four, chronicling his personal
experiences in exile as no poet in antiquity had done before; the *Ibis*,
a bizarre display of erudition in a unique poem of invective; and the
revision of the *Fasti*, undertaken but never completed. O. died in
exile during the winter of AD 17–18.

2 . THE COLLECTION

The twenty-one poems that today constitute the collection known
generally as the *Epistulae Heroidum* or *Heroides* are a diverse group.[8]
They comprise fourteen fictional epistles from heroines of Greek and
Roman mythology to the men they loved, one further such epistle by
the early Greek lyric poet Sappho, and three pairs of letters by
famous couples of myth and literature: Paris and Helen, Leander
and Hero, Acontius and Cydippe. The circumstances surrounding
the composition of the collection and its transmission from antiquity
through the Middle Ages raise troubling questions on three issues
important for literary history: (1) the dates of individual epistles or
groups of epistles and their relative position in the chronology of
O.'s career; (2) the publication of the collection and O.'s role in
arranging the poems; and (3) the authenticity of individual epistles.
O.'s own testimony offers an appropriate starting-point for inquiry.

In an elegy from the second book of the *Amores* O. addresses a
friend, the poet Macer, who is writing epic verse and in this context
describes some of his own poetic efforts (*Am.* 2.18.19–26):

> quod licet, aut artes teneri profitemur Amoris
>   (ei mihi, praeceptis urgeor ipse meis),
> aut quod Penelopes uerbis reddatur Vlixi
>   scribimus et lacrimas, Phylli relicta, tuas,

[8] They were probably called *Heroides* or *Heroidum liber* by O., a title that
had been used (Ἡρωῖναι) by the Greek poets Philochorus (*Suda* s.v.) and
Theocritus (*Suda* s.v.) for works of unknown content now lost. O.'s poems are
cited under this title by Priscian (*Inst.* 10.54 = *GLK* II 544.4) and the scholia
to the *Ibis* (357, 589). O. himself refers to a single poem from the *Heroides* as
an *epistula* (*Ars* 3.345); cf. Martini (1933) 18, Kraus (1968) 89, N. Horsfall,
'Some problems of titulature in Roman literary history', *B.I.C.S.* 28 (1981)
107.

> quod Paris et Macareus et quod male gratus Iason
>   Hippolytique parens Hippolytusque legant,
> quodque tenens strictum Dido miserabilis ensem
>   dicat et †Aoniae Lesbis amata lyrae.†

This passage appears to refer to a 'published work',[9] and thus provides the only external evidence for the date of composition of the *Heroides* listed here. The only collection of *Heroides* attested by O. therefore antedates at least the second edition of the *Amores* (c. 2 BC), and probably the first (c. 16 BC), if we accept the view that his revision of the *Amores* involved only the elimination of some poems with rearrangement of the remainder.[10] What poems were included in this early edition of *Heroides*?

The so-called double epistles (*Her.* 16–21) are nowhere mentioned by O., and this omission is curious. In addition, as a group they contain a number of lexical and metrical traits otherwise characteristic of O.'s later elegiac poetry written in exile (AD 8–17). If they come from his hand, they are likely to belong to this later period and cannot have belonged to the collection described in *Am.* 2.18.[11] This enlargement of the corpus, whether it was performed by O. or a later editor, consisted simply in adding one rather long (c. 1,564 lines) papyrus roll to the existing collection of *Heroides*. It is only a guess, but a plausible one, that this was the work not of O., but of an editor. For one thing, O. cannot have called this collection, which included epistles by male characters, *Heroides*. As a practical consequence, problems involving the authorship, language, and literary purpose of the double epistles must be separated from consideration of 1–15.

Am. 2.18 refers to an epistle by Sappho as part of what we may

[9] Modern terminology of this type must be used with caution in discussing the circumstances of ancient book production and circulation: once a book was released to the public its author had no further control over its fate; cf. E. J. Kenney, 'Books and readers in the Roman world', E. J. Kenney and W. V. Clausen (edd.) *The Cambridge history of classical literature.* II *Latin literature* (Cambridge 1982) 15–22. This point is especially relevant when considering the ways in which the corpus of the *Heroides* might have taken shape.

[10] See p. 3.

[11] Cf. M. Pohlenz, 'Die Abfassungszeit von Ovids Metamorphosen', *Hermes* 48 (1913) 3–4, Kraus (1968) 56.

call the first collection, and it is reasonable to associate the extant *Epistula Sapphus* with this reference. This association, however, is fraught with complications. Ovidian authorship of this poem is suspect on a number of grounds both internal, regarding its language and content, and external, due to the circumstances of its transmission. Convincing arguments against identifying O. as its author have been advanced over a long period, and this position is adopted in the present edition (see p. 13) . This creates as many complications as it resolves, but for the present it is necessary only to consider the consequences for our understanding of *Am.* 2.18; for if the *ES* is not by O., there must either once have been another poem written by O., now lost, or the references to Sappho's epistle in lines 26 and 34 of this elegy are also spurious. However improbable, this may well be the truth, for the *ES* is undoubtedly an early imitation of the *Heroides*, if imitation it is, and the interpolated notices of its existence in *Am.* 2.18 might be the product of editorial marginalia adding a notice of an epistle supposed to be by O. but absent from the catalogue of titles.[12]

How much of the rest of the corpus may be ascribed to O. is an open question. The scepticism advocated by Karl Lachmann may seem extreme,[13] but proceeds from the safest assumption warranted by the evidence, that only the poems mentioned by O. in the uncorrupted portion of *Am.* 2.18 are unquestionably authentic: *Her.* 1–2, 4–7, and 10–11. Despite occasional protests,[14] however, Ovidian

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[12] Cf. Tarrant (1981) 148–52. Ascription of spurious works to O. began very early. The *Halieutica* was thought to be Ovidian by Pliny the Elder (*c.* AD 77), but is certainly not from O.'s hand: cf. J. Richmond, 'The authorship of the Halieuticon ascribed to Ovid', *Philol.* 120 (1976) 92–106. For medieval poems incorrectly attributed to O., see P. Lehman, *Pseudo-antike Literatur des Mittelalters* (Leipzig and Berlin 1927). The *ES* may have been thought to be O.'s by Ausonius (4th cent. AD), who seems to refer to the *Heroides* (*Epigr.* 23.12–13): *quod sibi suaserunt, Phaedra et Elissa dabunt, | quod Canace Phyllisque et fastidita Phaoni.* But this is a selective list of famous suicides that might be a conflation of several sources. Ausonius did know the *ES*, but nothing proves that he knew it as part of the *Heroides*.

[13] Lachmann (1848).

[14] E.g. Courtney (1965), D. W. T. C. Vessey, 'Notes on Ovid, *Heroides* 9', *C.Q.* 19 (1969) 349–61, and P. E. Knox, 'Ovid's *Medea* and the authenticity of *Heroides* 12', *H.S.C.P.* 90 (1986) 207–23. For a different view of these issues,

authorship of *Her.* 1–14 is assumed by most modern scholars. The last word has not been said, but future discussions of this vexed issue will need to consider closely the problems posed by the concentration of lexical oddities in the poems not listed in *Am.* 2.18. An apparent exception is the third epistle, Briseis to Achilles, which few have doubted is O.'s.

An illustration of the difficulties involved in resolving such doubts may be provided from the eighth epistle, Hermione to Orestes, composed while she is being held captive by Pyrrhus. For Arthur Palmer this poem is 'the feeblest and least poetical of all the *Heroides*, and has certain solecisms in diction and metre, which are either spurious or show that the epistle is an unfinished and careless performance'.[15] Subjective judgements of quality are not a valid basis for disputing the attributions of the manuscript tradition. But if the number of questionable words, phrases, or lines exceeds the tolerance level, doubts may legitimately harden to conviction.

In lines 75–81 of this epistle Palmer and other editors have argued for substantial interpolation, but the lines which precede also pose problems. Hermione digresses on the apparently inescapable fate of the female descendants of Tantalus constantly to be the victims of abduction or rape. Her list of victims includes Leda, Hippodamia, and Helen's two abductions by Theseus and Paris. This is how the passage (*Her.* 8.65–74) is transmitted in the MSS:

> num generis fato, quod nostros errat in annos,   65
>   Tantalides matres apta rapina sumus?
> non ego fluminei referam mendacia cycni
>   nec querar in plumis delituisse Iouem.
> qua duo porrectus longe freta distinet Isthmos,
>   uecta peregrinis Hippodamia rotis;   70
> Castori Amyclaeo et Amyclaeo Polluci
>   reddita Mopsopia Taenaris urbe soror;
> Taenaris Idaeo trans aequor ab hospite rapta
>   Argolicas pro se uertit in arma manus.

see S. Hinds, 'Medea in Ovid: scenes from the life of an intertextual heroine', *M.D.* 30 (1993) 9–47 and T. Heinze, 'The authenticity of Ovid *Heroides* 12 reconsidered', *B.I.C.S.* 38 (1991–3) 94–8.

[15] In his edition, p. 351.

Most modern editors athetize the couplet 71–2, which refers to the return of Helen to her brothers after her abduction to Athens by Theseus. The hexameter contains three metrical irregularities: the hiatus at the third-foot caesura, the fourth-foot spondee, and the elision in the first foot. The hiatus before *et* is without parallel in O.'s elegiac verse, and there is no other example in O.'s elegies of a hexameter ending with three spondees.[16] Further, the elision of *Castori* cannot be ascribed to O. Elision of a final long vowel in a word of this shape (cretic) is very rare in Latin poetry, and never occurs in O.[17] In addition the repetition of *Taenaris* of line 72 in the following hexameter is impossibly awkward. This couplet (71–2) is bracketed as an interpolation by most editors after Palmer – with some justice, since it cannot be by O., although if the author of this poem is not O. perhaps it should not be excised. For the problems in this passage are more extensive.

In the previous two verses (69–70) Hippodamia is introduced into the list of victims of abduction. The pentameter, *uecta peregrinis Hippodamia rotis*, appears in exactly this form early in the second book of the *Ars amatoria*. There O. compares the glee of the successful lover who has applied the precepts of book 1 to Paris and to Pelops after they won their brides (*Ars* 2.5–8):

> talis ab armiferis Priameius hospes Amyclis
>   candida cum rapta coniuge uela dedit;
> talis erat qui te curru uictore ferebat,
>   uecta peregrinis Hippodamia rotis.

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[16] There are parallels for the hiatus in the *Metamorphoses* (5.312, 8.310), as Courtney (1965) 65 remarks. It is perhaps significant that the only other instance of hiatus in the third foot also occurs in an epistle not registered in *Am.* 2.18, i.e. 9.131 *forsitan et pulsa Aetolide Deianira*. Courtney also notes that the fourth-foot spondee in 8.71 may be defended by *Met.* 1.117; but while each peculiarity can be separately accounted for, the accumulation of anomalies in a single verse cannot.

[17] The problem cannot be explained away by trying to turn *Castori* into a dactyl, as was attempted by L. Mueller, *De re metrica* (Leipzig 1894) 342 and Platnauer (1951) 73n. 3. The vowel would be short in Greek, but that form of the declension is used only by Catullus and Statius (N–W 1 457) and, as Housman notes on Manil. 4.597 *add.*, neither poet elides the vowel.

This represents a characteristically Ovidian recasting of a Propertian pentameter (1.2.19–20):

> nec Phrygium falso traxit candore maritum
> auecta externis Hippodamia rotis.

The elision in the second foot of line 20 is of a type relatively common in Propertius, where it is found in 7.5% of his pentameters, but it is avoided by Tibullus, who has it only half as often (3.7%), and especially by O., who has such elision in only 1.3% of his elegiac pentameters.[18] O. eliminates the unwanted elision by using the uncompounded form of the participle and filling out the line with a synonymous adjective *peregrinis*. The pentameter, which constitutes the subject of the phrase in Propertius, is adapted to its new context in the *Ars amatoria* by its forming a vocative in an apostrophe to Hippodamia with *uecta* functioning as a participle like its counterpart in Propertius. In *Her.* 8.70 *uecta* must do duty for a finite verb, a slight awkwardness not characteristic of O.'s adaptations of other poets. Further, the entire couplet is out of place in this context. Hermione purports to be giving examples from among the female descendants of Tantalus, to whom she somewhat oddly refers as *Tantalides matres* in line 66. Hippodamia, however, was not a descendant of Tantalus; rather she was later married to one. And although Hermione makes a great point of verifying her descent from Pelops by reference to this list, none of the women she names is actually a descendant of Tantalus or Pelops. O. could not have blundered so: genealogical relationships were the sort of material he took great care with. Furthermore, it is not clear how the victory of Pelops could be considered in the same category as the two abductions of Helen or the rape of Leda. Hippodamia was, of course, only figuratively carried off by Pelops, who won her in a chariot race, while the author of these lines apparently means the phrase to be taken literally.

This passage appears to be an imitation of the *Ars amatoria*, and the imitator cannot be O.: the metrical correction of Propertius' elision could not have been performed by the same poet who elided *Castori*.[19] Palmer advocated bracketing only lines 71–2, and later 75–

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[18] Cf. Platnauer (1951) 90.

[19] This assertion, though it borders on the subjective, draws upon methods of stylistic analysis applied by scholars since Alexandrian times in detecting

81 as interpolations, but the difficulties in this passage are more extensive than he suspected and excision, if that is the answer, should be extended at least back to line 65. This remedy, however, is not necessary. The metrical and lexical anomalies of these nine couplets are consistent with the remainder of the poem, and in such a situation they should not necessarily be removed by emendation or excision. For example, this epistle offers us *Orestis* as the genitive form of the name of Pyrrhus' competitor for Hermione not once, but twice at lines 9 and 115, the only examples of such a genitive for this type of Greek name in Latin poetry. As Housman puts it, 'its author, if he was capable of the elision *Castori Amyclaeo* ... may also be thought capable of nonconformity in the declension of nouns'.[20] Perhaps his conjugation of verbs may be added to this dossier; for at line 21 we find the form *stertisset* for *stertuisset* in some MSS. Most editors bracket the couplet 21–2, while those who do not, print the variant *plorasset* or the emendation *sedisset*. But if this poem is the work of a later imitator of O., the lines and the form may stand: it is paralleled by the equally nonconformist *occulerat* found in Valerius Flaccus or *occulerunt* of Arnobius.[21] Another indication of composition at a date later in the first century AD is the use of the plural in the phrase *numeros Danai militis* in line 24. As Heinsius noticed, this is an instance of the use of *numeri* for *cohortes*, which is found regularly in later Latinity, beginning with Tacitus and the younger Pliny; its occurrence in a work by O. would be extraordinary.

The proliferation of such anomalies in the epistles not specifically attested as O.'s work in *Am.* 2.18 obliges us to treat seriously the possibility that the collection of *Heroides* as we know it is vastly different from the collection composed by O. Of the original form of the collection envisaged by O. the surviving poems give no indication: there is no evidence of division into books nor are there any signs of a designed sequence. The fourteen poems assumed to be O.'s could not have been accommodated in a single papyrus roll: they contain

forgeries or pseudepigrapha. For an accessible survey of the subject, see A. Grafton, *Forgers and critics: creativity and duplicity in western scholarship* (Princeton 1990) esp. 69–98.

[20] Housman (1910) 251–2 (= *Class. pap.* 828). Heinsius emends to *-ae* (adopted by Goold). See also Housman (1910) 252 (= *Class. pap.* 828–9) for the dative *Oresti* at line 59.

[21] Val. Flacc. 2.280; Arnob. 5.53; cf. N–W III 397.

approximately 2,192 verses, far more than the 1,457 lines of Lucretius' fifth book, the longest in Latin poetry. So large a collection of poems on diverse subjects was vulnerable to alteration in the conditions of book manufacture and circulation prevailing in antiquity.[22] Whether the copying was done onto papyrus rolls or from rolls to codex, an otherwise well-intentioned reader might make unfortunate editorial decisions as he assembled the amatory epistles known to him as O.'s. A final decision, if one is ever reached, will come only after a complete stylistic and lexical investigation of the corpus, and the importance of the inquiry resides in what more might be learned about O.'s technique as a poet.

And so we are left with the evidence of the *Heroides*. The first poem is Penelope's epistle to Ulysses, and it is the first mentioned in the list in *Am.* 2.18. That is probably not mere chance: it is likely that O. intended this poem to introduce the collection. He hints at this in a poem addressed to his wife (*Trist.* 1.6), where he says that if she had found her Homer (instead of O.) she would be as famous as Penelope (21–2), and, he goes on,[23]

> prima locum sanctas heroidas inter haberes,
>   prima bonis animi conspicerere tui.

In other words she, not Penelope, would stand at the head of the *Heroides*. The suggestion is neither ironic nor romantic; it is an assertion of O.'s own worth as an artist, deserving to be mentioned in the same breath as Homer.

3. THE *EPISTVLA SAPPHVS*

The epistle of Sappho to Phaon was not part of the medieval collection of *Heroides* (see below, p. 36) and after it came to light in the

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[22] The eight epistles mentioned in 2.18 (1–2, 4–7, 10–11) with the addition of Briseis (*Her.* 3) could easily have been accommodated in a single roll of approximately 1,392 lines. The intrusion of spurious works might have begun very early, as happened in the case of Theocritus, after which the collection of single *Heroides* could have been carried on two rolls of approximately 1,100 lines each. The present edition includes only seven of the epistles whose Ovidian authorship has never been disputed and the curious *Epistula Sapphus*.

[23] Lines 33–4 are transposed to follow 22 in the Venetian edition of 1486 and the arrangement has been adopted by most modern editors (e.g. Luck,

fifteenth century it attracted the considerable attention that attended the discovery of a new text. Opinions varied both as to whether the work was correctly ascribed to O. and whether it represented a translation from Sappho. Important commentaries were produced by Giorgio Merula (Venice 1471) and Domizio Calderini (Brescia 1476), and Angelo Poliziano lectured on the poem in 1481.[24] The work of critical and textual exegesis that began with them developed into a consensus in favour of Ovidian authorship which was not seriously challenged until the nineteenth century. One scholar published the suggestion that the epistle was a Renaissance forgery, and touched off an interesting debate, which was dampened somewhat by news of the existence of a thirteenth-century MS (F).[25] The more cogent points raised by Karl Lachmann had greater effect,[26] but once again the consensus of scholarly opinion swung back in the latter part of the nineteenth century towards accepting the work as O.'s, a view that prevailed through most of the twentieth century.[27]

A different view is adopted in this edition. Attention has long focused on verbal similarities between the *ES* and the certainly genuine *Heroides* as well as O.'s other works, but these parallels have usually been adduced as evidence of Ovidian authorship.[28] Most recently the case against Ovidian authorship has been argued by R. J. Tarrant, who subjects the verbal evidence to a close analysis in an effort to determine the relative chronology of the related passages.[29]

Goold). See E. J. Kenney, 'The poetry of Ovid's exile', *P.C.P.S.* 11 (1965) 39–41 on the significance of this poem in the first book of the *Tristia*.

[24] His notes survive in Munich, Staatsbibliothek cod. lat. 754 and have recently been published in E. Lazzeri, *Angelo Poliziano: commento inedito all'epistola ovidiana* (Florence 1971).

[25] F. W. Schneidewin, 'Ovids fünfzehnter Brief', *Rh.M.* 2 (1843) 138–44. See his further remarks in *Rh.M.* 3 (1845) 144–6, and the response by J. Mähly, *Rh.M.* 9 (1854) 623–5.

[26] See above, p. 7.

[27] Especially influential were D. Comparetti, *Sull'autenticità della epistola ovidiana di Saffo a Faone* (Florence 1876) and de Vries (1885), in addition to the remarks of L. C. Purser in Palmer's edition, pp. 419–24.

[28] Especially de Vries (1885), W. Zingerle, *Untersuchungen zur Echtheitsfrage der Heroiden Ovids* (Innsbruck 1878), and B. Eschenburg, *Wie hat Ovid einzelne Wörter und Wortklassen im Verse verwandt? Ein Beitrag zur Echtheitsfrage der Heroides* (Lübeck 1886).

[29] Tarrant (1981), supported by C. E. Murgia, 'Imitation and authenticity in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 1.477 and *Heroides* 15', *A.J.P.* 106 (1985) 456–74; but

The conclusions he reaches tend to confirm the indications of other metrical and lexical anomalies that the poem is later than O.'s exile poetry, and consequently cannot be by him.

If the poem is not by O., then by whom? The question has troubled many scholars who have dealt with this question, since it has seemed unlikely that its author could have remained anonymous. That the author was in many respects a talented poet is clear; but the finished product is a very different kind of poem from the *Heroides*. In all of the other epistles, including those whose authenticity has been disputed, the poem represents a character taken from an earlier narrative and depicted at a crucial juncture of her story. Although it is clear that the author of the *ES* knew Sappho's poetry, the narrative setting of this poem is not drawn from any work of literature, but from the biography of Sappho and the later traditions surrounding her life. It was an ingenious idea, but it was not O.'s.

4. THE EPISTLES

(a) *The genre*

The collection of *Heroides* is unique among the works of elegy surviving from Greek and Roman antiquity. In the *Ars amatoria* O. asserts the novelty of these epistles when he recommends his own poetry as reading material for women (3.345–6)

> uel tibi composita cantetur Epistula uoce:
> ignotum hoc aliis ille nouauit opus.

The implications of this straightforward statement have sometimes been denied, but there is no reason to believe that any Greek or Roman poet wrote epistles like the *Heroides* before O.[30] As in the case of Latin love elegy, the originality of the *Heroides* consists primarily

the opposite conclusion is reached by E. Courtney, 'Ovid and an epigram of Philodemus', *L.C.M.* 15 (1990) 117–18.

[30] As Kenney (1982) 455 observes, such innovation characterizes O.'s entire poetic career: 'Every one of his surviving works represents a new literary departure, an unpredictable and individual variation on inherited themes and techniques.' Cf. Jacobson (1974) 319–22, with reference to earlier literature, and F. Spoth, *Ovids Heroides als Elegien* (Munich 1992) 22–8.

in the combination of features from other literary forms, and in this respect they may represent the most interesting example in Roman poetry of innovation in genre.[31] Detailed study of the collection reveals elements traceable to different branches of the rhetorical and literary traditions, although none can adequately account in and of itself for O.'s achievement in the *Heroides*.

There are few readers of the *Heroides* who would now accept at face value the old view of these poems as versified rhetorical set pieces.[32] But it would be a mistake to ignore completely the influence of O.'s early training in declamation. In his poetic autobiography O. relates how, thanks to the considerate attention of his parents, both he and his brother were able to study with the finest professors of rhetoric in Rome (*Trist.* 4.10.15–16). That O. preferred a literary career to a forensic one did not mean that he rejected his intellectual roots. On the contrary, the elder Seneca informs us (*Contr.* 2.2.8) of O.'s relationship as young man with the rhetor M. Porcius Latro: 'He was an admirer of Latro, though his style of speech was different. He had a neat, seemly and attractive talent. Even in those days his speech could be regarded as simply poetry put into prose. Moreover, he was so keen a student of Latro that he transferred many epigrams (*sententias*) into his own verse.' It would be an easy task to add to the examples adduced by Seneca of rhetorically inspired *sententiae* to be found in O.'s poetry.[33] Much has been made of Seneca's other recollection about O.'s performances in the rhetorical schools, that he 'rarely declaimed *controuersiae*, and only ones involving portrayal of character (*non nisi ethicas*). He preferred *suasoriae*, finding all argumentation tiresome.' It has often been argued that the *Heroides*

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[31] The phenomenon which received its classic formulation in W. Kroll, *Studien zum Verständnis der römischen Literatur* (Stuttgart 1924) 202–24, in a chapter titled 'Die Kreuzung der Gattungen'. The terms in which Kroll opened this line of interpretation are perhaps too mechanical, but the questions he posed about the nature of genre in Roman poetry remain at the heart of critical inquiry into the *Heroides*; cf. G. B. Conte, *Generi e lettori* (Milan 1991) 163.

[32] To be found, e.g., in L. C. Purser's introduction to Palmer's commentary; cf. Martini (1933) 17, Wilkinson (1955) 5–10. Again, for earlier literature Jacobson (1974) 322–30 provides a judicious summary. Maurer (1990) 49–76 revisits the issue of rhetorical influences in the *Heroides*.

[33] Cf. S. F. Bonner, *Roman declamation* (Liverpool 1949) 152–6.

derive their content and structure from the style of the *suasoriae*.[34] To the extent that persuasion is an objective in some of the *Heroides* comparison with this type of rhetorical exercise is relevant, but the more important point that Seneca makes is about O.'s interest in character.

There was another type of exercise practised in the schools of rhetoric known as *ethopoeia*, or 'speech in character'. Quintilian (*Inst.* 3.8.52) considered the *ethopoeia* to be closely related to the *suasoria*. This exercise required the student to imagine himself in the situation of a famous figure from history or mythology, and frame a speech appropriate to the moment: for example, Sulla on abdicating the dictatorship, Priam to Achilles, or Niobe after the death of her children.[35] The impact of this form of schooling on the representation of character in Roman literature has been amply documented.[36] The nature of the *ethopoeia* as an imaginary speech suited to a character's circumstances clearly has special relevance for the fictional epistles of the *Heroides*, adapted to the crises in which the heroines find themselves.[37] But it is possible to find close analogies in many other types of poetry, especially in those that take the form of a monologue.

Because a number of the epistles of the *Heroides* are drawn from the characters of epic or tragedy, attention has naturally focused upon the monologues of drama for comparison with O.[38] Such models were important for O., but it is appropriate to call attention to other poems in which the identity of the poet is concealed behind

[34] E.g. H. Dörrie, 'Die dichterische Absicht in den Epistulae Heroidum', *A.&A.* 13 (1967) 45–6, A.-F. Sabot, 'Les Héroides d'Ovide', *A.N.R.W.* II 31.4 (1981) 2553–5.

[35] See S. F. Bonner, *Education in ancient Rome* (Berkeley 1977) 267–70.

[36] Jacobson (1974) 325–30 surveys the topic, while emphasizing the differences between the rhetorical exercise and the *Heroides*; cf. Kraus (1968) 90–1, Maurer (1990) 66–70.

[37] Nicolaus (*Rhet. Gr.* III 489) offers what became the standard definition of the form: ἠθοποιία ἐστὶ λόγος ἁρμόζων τοῖς ὑποκειμένοις. Comparisons have been made between the *Heroides* and *ethopoeiae* since Richard Bentley, *Dissertations upon the Epistles of Phalaris*, ed. A. Dyce (reprint, Hildesheim 1971) 83.

[38] E.g. Wilkinson (1955) 86.

the voice of a character.[39] Examples of such poetry are common in Hellenistic Greece. Theocritus' second *Idyll*, for example, represents the lament of a woman who has been betrayed by her lover. And other poems in the Theocritean corpus (3, 11, 12, and 23) contain monologues on similar amatory themes. The so-called 'Fragmentum Grenfellianum' (*CA*, pp. 177–8) is a lyric poem of the late Hellenistic period containing the lament of an anonymous female lover. And a curious piece of *c.* 100 BC may represent a lament by Helen of Troy (*CA*, p. 185).[40] There is evidence that Greek poets adapted this form to elegy as well. Fragments of elegiac verse from the early empire that seem to consist of monologue suggest a background for the development of Roman elegy somewhat broader than on the traditional view.[41] So too does the incorporation of such monologues into Greek Romances.[42] These works contain many of the features that distinguish Roman love elegy – the references to mythological examples, the identification of the poet and the speaker – but none combines all of these elements in the manner familiar from Latin elegy, and none makes use of the epistolary form.

This last innovation was probably first introduced by Propertius, who in his last book casts one poem (4.3) in the form of a letter from a woman he calls Arethusa to her lover Lycotas, a soldier who is away on campaign. Its opening verses (1–6) strike a note that becomes familiar in the *Heroides*:[43]

> haec Arethusa suo mittit mandata Lycotae,
> cum totiens absis, si potes esse meus.
> si qua tamen tibi lecturo pars oblita derit,
> haec erit e lacrimis facta litura meis:
> aut si qua incerto fallet te littera tractu,
> signa meae dextrae iam morientis erunt.

[39] Jacobson (1974) 343–4 rightly emphasizes the importance of this tradition, which certainly influenced the development of Latin subjective elegy.

[40] Jacobson (1974) adduces both these fragments.

[41] For example, *SH* 962, 964, and *P.Oxy.* 54 (1987) no. 3723; cf. P. J. Parsons, 'Eine neugefundene griechische Liebeselegie', *M.H.* 45 (1988) 65–74.

[42] E.g. Chariton 1.14.6–10, 3.10.4–8, 5.1.4–7, 5.10.6–9, 6.6.2–5.

[43] Cf. 11.1n.

It seems clear that O. was influenced in his conception of the *Heroides* by this poem.[44] For the idea of drafting a love letter in verse, Propertius may have drawn on traditions of narrative in Hellenistic verse.[45] The inspiration to adapt this experiment in representing the character of heroines from literature seems to have come from O. alone. For the distinguishing feature of O.'s *Heroides* is their inspiration from works of literature: O.'s Dido is not a mythological figure, she is the heroine of Virgil's *Aeneid* 4. And, as far as we can tell, each of the single *Heroides* has a similar point of reference.

(b) The literary background

Each of the heroines' epistles refers self-consciously to a specific source in earlier literature; they represent episodes set in the interstices of the literary tradition. The reader finds himself in book 19 of the *Odyssey*: Penelope cannot sleep after her interview with the stranger who speaks with such assurance of her absent husband. How did she fill the hours till morning? O. knows: she wrote the letter that is *Heroides* 1.[46] In the anxious moments as dawn breaks over Libya, Dido knows that Aeneas and the Trojan fleet are putting to sea. She considers using force to stop him, but rejects it; instead, she writes our seventh epistle. This use of literary models represents a very different approach to the process of allusion or imitation ob-

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[44] Since Heinsius first made the suggestion in his introductory note to *Her.* 1, it has sometimes been argued that Propertius imitated O.: e.g. R. Bürger, *De Ovidi carminum amatoriorum inventione et arte* (Wolfenbüttel 1901) 27–9; M. Pohlenz, *De Ovidi carminibus amatoriis* (Göttingen 1913) 14–17; H. Mersmann, *Quaestiones Propertianae* (diss. Münster 1931). While the possibility that Propertius imitated O. cannot be dismissed out of hand, it represents a less plausible scenario than the younger poet employing Propertius' unique example of an elegiac epistle as a springboard for a new poetic venture. Most of the specific arguments for Ovidian priority have been effectively refuted by E. Reitzenstein, *Wirklichkeitsbild und Gefühlsentwicklung bei Properz*, *Philol.* Suppl. 29.2 (Leipzig 1936) 17–34. Cf. also C. Becker, 'Die späten Elegien des Properz', *Hermes* 99 (1971) 469–70.

[45] Cf. Maurer (1990) 38–45.

[46] Cf. Kennedy (1984) on the setting of the first epistle in the context of *Od.* 19. As A. Barchiesi remarks in 'Narratività e convenzione nelle Heroides', *M.D.* 19 (1987) 66, 'la poetica delle *Eroidi* suggerisce, più semplicemente, che è possibile aprire nuove finestre su storie già compiute'.